

**News Release From
Senator Tim Johnson,
Senator John Thune,
Representative Stephanie Herseth Sandlin**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**South Dakota Delegation Supports Governor's Disaster Request and Asks President for
Emergency Declaration**

WASHINGTON, DC (May 3, 2010) – U.S. Senators Tim Johnson (D-SD) and John Thune (R-SD) and U.S. Representative Stephanie Herseth Sandlin (D-SD) today sent a letter to President Barack Obama supporting Governor Michael Rounds' request for a presidential disaster declaration in response to spring flooding that began on March 1, 2010. This flooding caused extensive damage in 30 counties, imposing extraordinary expenses for state and local agencies.

"South Dakotans have come to expect tough storms from time to time, but the flooding this season has been particularly severe. My recent tour of the damage with local officials made clear that it will take a federal investment to help these communities repair damage and rebuild infrastructure. I strongly urge President Obama to approve this disaster request without delay," said Johnson.

"Flooding has severely impacted roads and bridges in parts of South Dakota this year," said Thune. "A federal disaster declaration will lead to timely aid and increased cooperation between local, state, and federal agencies to help repair and restore public infrastructure. After meeting with local officials and seeing the damage in person, I wholeheartedly support the disaster declaration that Governor Rounds has submitted and stand committed to working together with state and local agencies to facilitate recovery."

"After holding several public meetings focused on the impact of flooding has on our state, it's clear that this annual cycle has left state and local officials without the resources necessary to repair and maintain infrastructure," Rep. Herseth Sandlin said. "I hope the President will move quickly in approving Governor Rounds' disaster declaration request. Further, I look forward to continuing to work with various agencies and governments to develop a comprehensive flood mitigation strategy."

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May 3, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama

President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

On behalf of the people of South Dakota, we write to express our full support of Governor M. Michael Rounds' recent request for a Presidential disaster declaration covering extensive portions of our state. This declaration would greatly assist South Dakota's recovery from major spring flooding that began on March 1, 2010 and continues today.

As South Dakota's disaster declaration request indicates, saturated soil from the heavy precipitation in the fall of 2009 and a series of severe storms during the winter of 2009-10 combined to cause heavy run-off, flooding and ponding during the snow melt that began on March 1, 2010. This flooding activity caused extensive damage in 30 counties across the state, and required state and local agencies to incur extraordinary expenses in the course of providing emergency response services. Among its many impacts, the overland and riverine flooding washed out roads and culverts, damaged bridges and road beds, and cut off access to rural homes. In areas where roads remain inundated, road damage is still occurring.

Fortunately, the quick response of many governmental and private personnel, along with assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, helped to reduce the hardship associated with these impacts. However, as Governor Rounds writes, the overall flood situation is of "such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and affected local governments, and supplemental federal assistance is necessary."

In light of these considerations, we respectfully request that you expeditiously declare a major disaster for the relevant areas of our state and that you instruct federal agencies to expedite the delivery of all forms of federal disaster assistance for which South Dakota would be eligible based upon that declaration. South Dakota has responded to ten Presidential disaster declarations in the past five years, and the costs associated with this disaster will only make state, county and municipal budgets worse if federal assistance is not provided.

We would be pleased to offer any assistance that you may require in fulfilling this request, and we thank you for your consideration of this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us if we can provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,

Tim Johnson
U.S. Senate

John Thune
U.S. Senate

Stephanie Herseth Sandlin
Member of Congress